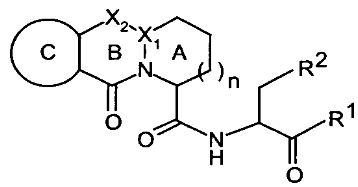
Abstract

This invention provides novel caspase inhibitors of formula **I**:



I

wherein R^1 is hydrogen, CHN_2, R, or $-CH_2Y$; R is an aliphatic group, an aryl group, an aralkyl group, a heterocyclyl group, or a heterocyclylalkyl group; Y is an electronegative leaving group; R^2 is CO_2H, CH_2CO_2H, or esters, amides or isosteres thereof; X_2-X_1 is $N(R^3)-C(R^3)$, $C(R^3)_2-C(R^3)$, $C(R^3)_2-N$, N=C, $C(R^3)=C$, C(=O)-N, or $C(=O)-C(R^3)$; each R^3 is independently selected from hydrogen or C_{1-6} aliphatic; Ring C is a fused aryl ring; n is 0, 1 or 2; and each methylene carbon in Ring A is optionally and independently substituted by =O, or one or more halogen, C_{1-4} alkyl, or C_{1-4} alkoxy. The compounds are useful for treating caspase-mediated diseases.